



Michigan Interfaith Power & Light: Bringing Diverse Faith Groups Together to Save Energy



Michigan IPL Executive Director, Julie Lyons Bricker, and Michigan IPL Board Treasurer & congregant, Dave Friedrichs of First Unitarian Universalist Church Ann Arbor on First UU's roof

Michigan Interfaith Power & Light (Michigan IPL) is a coalition of congregations across Michigan whose mission is to involve communities of faith by promoting and implementing energy conservation, energy efficiency, renewable energy, and related sustainable practices. Formed in 2002, Michigan IPL became the fourth state affiliate of the national Interfaith Power & Light, which now has 43 state affiliates.

Michigan IPL has a membership of more than 225 congregations of diverse faiths and brings them together through a common commitment to sustainability and energy education. Members belong to Buddhist, Catholic, Episcopal, Evangelical Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Unitarian, United Methodist, and other denominations. Michigan IPL has two primary objectives:

- 1) **Foster and engage an educated faith constituency that's committed to proactive solutions for environmental sustainability.** As houses of worship become more energy efficient and spend less on energy bills, funds can be re-purposed to support community services like food pantries, job placement assistance, homeless shelters, and childcare.
- 2) **Convince public officials, businesses, and utilities to significantly reduce energy demand and move Michigan to a cleaner, more efficient energy system.** Reducing Michigan's reliance on costly, imported fossil fuels will help grow Michigan's economy; the construction and installation of efficient and clean energy technologies will create new jobs throughout the state.

To date, Michigan IPL has provided over 350 congregations with free energy audits and energy education to help reduce their energy use by 10% or more. As a result, member congregations have made energy efficient upgrades to new facilities; some have even installed renewable energy technologies such as wind turbines, solar panels, and geothermal heat. They also provide thousands of compact fluorescent bulbs, LED exit signs, and other energy efficient technologies at no or low cost to Michigan IPL member houses of worship.

Michigan IPL educates lawmakers and shapes energy policy reforms statewide. Their efforts helped lead to the passage of major energy laws in 2008, which included a renewable energy standard requiring 10% of Michigan's power to come from renewable sources by 2015, and a new law effective in 2012 requiring utilities to achieve 1% energy efficiency savings each year.

Accomplishments

Michigan IPL works statewide to gather and focus the grassroots power within Michigan's faith communities to help them become effective in minimizing their impact on climate change. To aid in these efforts, Michigan IPL has enlisted the use of programs and services offered by ENERGY STAR® to help meet the needs of their faith centers.

Michigan IPL started benchmarking houses of worship using the ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager® software in 2009. That year they successfully benchmarked sixteen houses of worship; to date they have benchmarked a total of 64. Of these, Michigan IPL helped six earn ENERGY STAR certification in 2013 and now Michigan has more ENERGY STAR certified houses of worship than any other state in the country. There are currently ten additional houses of worship



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Rev. Dr. Yvette Griffin worked with her congregation to earn the ENERGY STAR for the Pilgrim Baptist Church in Detroit

in Michigan who are qualified for 2014 ENERGY STAR certification. Michigan IPL actively promotes the *ENERGY STAR Action Workbook for Congregations* as a tool to begin implementing efficient upgrades and behavioral changes. Michigan IPL also offers a member benefit for discounted ENERGY STAR qualified appliances and lighting products from local retailers.

In 2004, Michigan IPL developed an online shopping system to sell advanced energy technologies—like high quality models of compact fluorescent bulbs—before they were readily available to the public. This system also calculated carbon reductions based on sales. From 2004 to 2007, Michigan IPL members' on-line purchases ultimately saved more than 17,000 tons of carbon dioxide.

From 2011 – 2013, Michigan IPL partnered with DTE Energy to involve 48 houses of worship in the Detroit area in a comprehensive energy efficiency pilot program. Each participant received a free energy assessment and formal report, an energy efficient upgrade products "Tool-kit", the installation of the products, and assistance setting up an ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager account.

Project report numbers indicate an 11% cost savings project-wide. Participants avoided approximately 978.9 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MtCO₂e) in the first year compared with the baseline year. MI IPL is currently in partnership with the US Green Building Council-Detroit Chapter to assist their houses of worship with the submittal of applications for ENERGY STAR Building Certification.

Recognition

ENERGY STAR awarded Michigan IPL the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) ENERGY STAR Congregation Award in 2006 for their work in energy education. In 2007, Michigan IPL was chosen to run a pilot for the ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager project, which allows congregations to track real time energy savings and carbon emissions reductions as they make upgrades. Michigan IPL's Executive Director, Julie Lyons Bricker, was invited to speak at the EPA ENERGY STAR Greening America's Congregations White House event in 2012. Michigan IPL has also been recognized by state and local organizations:

- In 2009, Michigan IPL founder, Father Charles Morris, was honored by the Detroit-based Warm Training Center (a nonprofit that promotes resource-efficient, affordable, and healthy homes) at their first annual Awards Breakfast.
- The following year, Michigan IPL won an award from the Michigan Earth Day Fest for their work in "greening" houses of worship across the state.
- The Detroit Free Press recognized Michigan IPL founder and current board member, Father Charles Morris, as one of Michigan's Green Leaders in 2011.
- In 2013, Michigan IPL won the Community Energy Efficiency Partner of the Year from DTE Energy and Engineering Society of Detroit.
- That same year Father Charles Morris and Executive Director, Julie Lyons Bricker, were honored by the Great Lakes Renewable Energy Association at their annual Awards Luncheon.

"We have more than a decade of sharing ENERGY STAR resources with our membership from the Congregations Manuals, to Portfolio Manager accounts, to ENERGY STAR products and appliance discounts. The ENERGY STAR label has been a very helpful standard for helping our members make smart energy decisions."

- Julie Lyons Bricker,
Executive Director, Michigan